



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

DHS WORKS TO REUNITE MOTHER, INFANT SEPARATED BY SMUGGLERS

HOUSTON—U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Border Patrol agents teamed up to reunite a Guatemalan mother and her four-month-old girl here Wednesday after smugglers separated the two in an all-too-common hostage ploy to ensure payment.

The incident began near the Mexico border Tuesday when Border Patrol agents from Laredo Sector's Freer Station arrested several individuals being smuggled into the U.S. after the smugglers guiding them had fled.

A Guatemalan woman in this group said the smugglers took her 4-months-old infant and said the baby would be returned in Houston after they received payment.

Border Patrol contacted ICE about the kidnapping. Special Agent-in-Charge Joseph R. Webber, who leads ICE investigations in Houston, immediately dispatched a special agent to make contact with individuals at a residence where he was told the infant would be. The special agent confirmed that the missing infant was at the location. ICE agents went to the residence Oct. 6 and took custody of the infant, who was unharmed.

ICE agents interviewed all those at the residence and determined all were legally living in the United States.

The smugglers had apparently fled. No arrests were made.

The mother was later escorted to Houston and reunited with her daughter.

"This is yet another grim example of how far smugglers will go to make a hefty profit," said Webber. "Smugglers have no regard for human life. They will go to any length to exploit the innocence of a young life. This incident could have resulted in tragedy for this mother. Fortunately,

this time, with the cooperation of our sister agency, this mother and child were safely reunited. But dealing with smugglers often leads to tragedy.”

The mother and infant are now temporarily residing in a family shelter.

The incident is under investigation.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.